

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 NEW DELHI 7537

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: A MONTH BEFORE MORARJI DESAI'S VISIT

1. SUMMARY: A MONTH BEFORE HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S GOVERNMENT AND PARTY ARE IN A STATE OF SOME DISARRAY. POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH BOTH IS MOUNTING. DESAI'S LEADERSHIP IS NOT UNDER ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE AT THIS TIME AND HE MAY WELL CARRY
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ON AS PRIME MINISTER TO THE END OF HIS PRESENT FIVE-YEAR TERM IF HIS HEALTH PERMITS. BUT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE FACTIONAL COMPOSITION OF THE JANATA PARTY GOVERNMENT NOW SEEM INEVITABLE.

2. THE DOWNWARD SLIDE IN THE POLITICAL STRENGTH AND COHESIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE RULING PARTY HAS

BECOME MOST PRONOUNCED SINCE THE TURN OF THE YEAR. MRS. GANDHI'S RESURGENCE HAS DRAMATIZED THE DECLINE IN JANTA'S POPULAR STANDING.

DESPITE THESE DEVELOPMENTS, DESAI CONTINUES TO PREFER TO STAND ABOVE THE FRAY, AND HAS BEEN LOATH TO EXERCISE HIS POLITICAL MUSCLE TO REVERSE THE TREND. HE IS VIEWED IN INDIA WITH RESPECT, BUT IS NOT SEEN AS A PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE LEADER NOR A POPULAR ONE.

3. THERE CONTINUES TO BE A WIDESPREAD FEELING, SHARED BY MANY WITHIN THE PARTY, THAT THE JANATA HAS SQUANDERED ITS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. THE SENSE OF DISILLUSION STEMS FROM MANY SOURCES, AND WAS TO SOME EXTENT INEVITABLE. SOME BRIGHT SPOTS STAND OUT. JANATA'S CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY IS ONE OF THESE. ALONG WITH NUCLEAR POLICY, IT IS AN AREA TO WHICH THE PM DEVOTES PARTICULAR ATTENTION AND WHICH HE HAS HANDLED DECISIVELY AND WELL. IN OTHER RESPECTS, THE IMAGE AND POPULAR SUPPORT OF THE JANATA GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SEIOUSLY DAMAGED BY THE CONDUCT OF JANATA FACTIONAL LEADERS. THERE IS GROWING BELIEF THAT SOMETHING DRASTIC WILL HAVE TO BE DONE ABOUT PARTY FACTIONALISM AND INDISCIPLINE, BUT IN A FLUID POLITICAL SITUATION SPECUALTION ABOUT WHAT FORM THIS MIGHT TAKE LEADS TO A PLETHORA OF SCENARIOS. DESPITE MRS. GANDHI'S SUCCESSES AT THE POLLS AND HER WILLINGNESS TO TAKE TO THE STREETS IN AGITATIONAL CAMPAIGNS, GENERAL
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ELECTIONS STILL SEEM A LONG WAY OFF, SO THAT DESAI HAS TIME TO TURN THINGS AROUND. FOR HIM TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THAT TIME WILL INVOLVE HIS TAKING THE TOUGH, TIMELY DECISIONS IN PARTY MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS HE HAS GENERALLY BEEN UNWILLING TO MAKE OVER THE PAST 14 MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

4. A MONTH BEFORE HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S GOVERNMENT AND PARTY ARE IN A STATE OF SOME DISARRAY. POPULAR DISSATISFACTION WITH BOTH IS MOUNTING. ALTHOUGH DESAI'S LEADERSHIP IS NOT UNDER ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE AT THIS TIME, AND HE MAY WELL CARRY ON AS PRIME MINISTER TO THE END OF HIS PRESENT FIVE-YEAR TERM IF HIS HEALTH PERMITS, WE SUBSCRIBE TO THE VIEW EXPRESSED BY THE EDITOR OF THE "STATEMAN" WHO WROTE THAT " A LITTLE OVER A YEAR AFTER THE JANATA PARTY CAME INTO BEING, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR AS DAYLIGHT THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT CANNOT LAST ITS FULL TERM OF OFFICE IN ITS PRESENT FORM."

5. THE DOWNWARD SLIDE IN THE POLITICAL STRENGTH AND COHESIVEMENSS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND RULING PARTY HAS BECOME MOST PRONOUNCED SINCE THE TURN OF THE YEAR. BE-

FORE THEN, DISSATISFACTION HAD BEEN GROWING, WITH THE GOVERNMENT COMING UNDER CRITICISM FOR ITS ALLEGED "DO-NOTHING" APPROACH TO MANY OF INDIA'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS AND THE PARTY UNDER FIRE FOR ITS SEEMING INABILITY TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER TO BECOME MORE THAN A LOOSE, POSSIBLE EMPHEMERAL COALITION OF WIDELY DISPARATE POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS. THIS DISSATISFACTION WAS LIMITED, HOWEVER, BY CONTINUED IF DIMINISHING WILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF THE PUBLIC TO ALLOW JANATA MORE TIME TO GET ITS ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL HOUSES IN ORDER AND BY STILL VIVID RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EMERGENCY. MORE-OVER THERE SEEMED NO SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE TO THE JANATA FROM OUTSIDE; THE CONGRESS PARTY, BADLY DEFEATED IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS IN MARCH AND IN STATE ELECTIONS

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THREE MONTHS LATER, WAS ITSELF IN A STATE OF DISARRAY. ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN FROM THE VERY OUTSET OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT SPECULATION ABOUT A REALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL PARTY FORCES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE JANATA, WE SHARED THE VIEW OF MOST OBSERVERS THAT IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT THIS DID TAKE PLACE AT SOME EARLY STAGE IT WOULD NOT THREATEN DESAI'S POSITION AS LEADER OF GOVERNMENT.

6. THE FIRST OF THE YEAR, WHICH BROUGHT PRESIDENT CARTER TO INDIA, WAS ALSO THE DATE MRS. GANDHI CHOSE FOR THE CONVENTION WHICH LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE CONGRESS PARTY UNDER HER LEADERSHIP. AT THE TIME, HER MOVE SEEMED AN AUDACIOUS, ALMOST DESPERATE MEASURE TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST A LIMITED POLITICAL BASE IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION FROM A CLEAR MAJORITY OF CONGRESS PARTY LEADERS. IT SEEMS INSTEAD TO HAVE BEEN A MASTERFUL STROKE. SINCE THEN SHE HAS WONE A SERIES OF DRAMATIC VICTORIES IN HER VIGOROUS PURSUIT OF THE COMEBACK TRAIL. THESE SUCCESS HAVE SERVED, AS NO OTHER DEVELOPMENTS COULD HAVE, TO HIGHLIGHT THE DECLINE IN JANATA'S POPULAR STANDING. THE JANATA LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO DEAL UNITEDLY AND EFFECTIVELY WITH THE NEW POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY MRS. GANDHI'S RESURGENCE AS "THE" OPPOSITION. TO THE CONTRARY, IT HAS STEPPED UP AND MADE MORE PUBLIC ITS FACTIONAL AND PERSONAL DIFFERENCES. THIS HAS CONTRIBUTED FURTHER TO ITS FALL IN POPULAR ESTEEM.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 NEW DELHI 7537

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. DESPITE THESE DEVELOPMENTS, DESAI CONTINUES TO
PREFER TO STAND ABOVE THE FRAY. ALTHOUGH HE HAS EDGED FURTHER INTO
POLITICAL ORGANIZATION MATTERS, HE HAS NOT TRIED TO CRACK HIS
PRIME MINISTER'S WHIP OVER HIS WARRING COLLEAGUES. THAT
HE HAS NOT DONE SO IS ATTRIBUTED TO A BELIEF ON HIS
PART THAT HIS OWN BASE OF SUPPORT WITHIN PARTY RANKS
DOES NOT PERMIT HIM THE OPTION, TO THE MELLOWNESS IN-
DUCED BY OLD AGE AND A LONG PRISON SPELL, AND, RELATED TO BOTH
OF THESE, TO HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO ROCK THE BOAT AND
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DISTURB "PARTY UNITY" NOW THAT HE HAS ATTAINED IN THE
PRIME MINISTERSHIP HIS LONGTIME GOAL. YET THE PM'S
APPARENT BELIEF THAT HE IS NOT IN A STRONG ENOUGH
POSITION TO BE MORE FORCEFUL IN DEALING WITH THE DIS-
ARRAY WHICH HAS OVERTAKEN HIS PARTY IS IN THE VIEW OF MANY
OBSERVERS NOT WELL-FOUNDED. THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME

MINISTER CAN BE ONE OF CONSIDERABLE POWER. THE WIDE-SPREAD BELIEF THAT IT IS DESAI ALONE WHO HOLDS PARTY AND GOVERNMENT TOGETHER ADDS TO THIS LARGELY UNEXERCISED POWER.

8. HOWEVER LOATH THE PM MAY BE TO EXERCISE POLITICAL MUSCLE IN DEALING WITH THE JANATA PARTY'S LENGTHENING SERIES OF PUBLIC CONTROVERSIES AND CONFRONTATIONS, THESE HAVE OBVIOUSLY INCREASINGLY DISTRACTED HIM FROM THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT WHICH IS HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERN. AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, MORARJI FUNCTIONS MORE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD (TO USE THE POPULAR PHRASE HERE) THAN AS A DOMINATING AND DOMINANT LEADER. SOME AREAS, SUCH AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NUCLEAR POLICY, HAVE CLAIMED HIS PARTICULAR ATTENTION. HE HAS HANDLED THESE DECISIVELY AND WELL, TAKING THE PARTY AND MUCH OF THE PUBLIC WITH HIM AND DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH CHALLENGES TO HIS AUTHORITY. BUT IN MANY OTHER AREAS, HE CONTINUES TO ALLOW HIS COLLEAGUES CONSIDERABLE LATITUDE. HE REMAINS UNUSUALLY TOLERANT OF DISSENT, AND THIS HAS GIVEN CABINET MEMBERS LICENSE TO SPEAK ON OCCASION IN CONTRADICTORY TERMS AND ENGAGE IN OPEN INTERNECINE WARFARE. HE CONTINUES TO PURSUE AND PREACH OLD FADS -- PROHIBITION IS OF COURSE THE BEST EXAMPLE -- AND THIS TENDS TO REINFORCE HIS LONGTIME REPUTATION AS AN OLD-FASHIONED, MORALIZING, INFLEXIBLE MAN. THE NET RESULT IS A PERVASIVE IMPRESSION THAT IN MANY AREAS NO ONE IS REALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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IN CHARGE IN DELHI AND THAT THE JANATA SHIP OF STATE IS DRIFTING TOWARD AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

9. WHATEVER THE SHORTCOMINGS OF HIS 14 MONTHS IN OFFICE, DESAI IS VIEWED WITH RESPECT IN MOST QUARTERS, AND IS SURELY MORE HIGHLY REGARDED THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER MEMBER OF HIS UNEVEN CABINET. HE IS NOT SEEN AS A PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE LEADER, AND IS CERTAINLY NOT A POPULAR ONE. HE HAS FAILED TO STIR THE POPULAR IMAGINATION OR TO EVOKE THE KIND OF CHARISMATIC VIBRATIONS WHICH SURROUNDED NEHRU AND STILL ENVELOP MRS. GANDHI. HE IS CONSIDERED A PATRIOT AND A DEVOTED BELIEVER IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. HIS PERSONAL INTEGRITY IS RECOGNIZED AS UNIMPEACHABLE, THOUGH THIS IMAGE OF RECTITUDE HAS BEEN MARRED SOMEWHAT BY SUSPICIONS (PROMPTED BY HIS ADVERSARIES AND RIVALS), ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS SON. INCREASINGLY, HOWEVER, HE IS BEING SCORED AS AN OLD MAN INSUFFICIENTLY DETERMINED AND DECISIVE TO DEAL WITH AN EVER-MORE COMPLEX TANGLE OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY NANAJI DESHMUKH, JANATA'S MOST POWERFUL JANA SANGHI, RECENTLY SUGGESTED THAT ALL LEADERS OVER 60

LEAVE OFFICE AND DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO CONSTRUCTIVE WORK, AND ONLY THIS WEEK STEEL MINISTER BIJU PATNAIK REPORTEDLY SAID THAT IF THE "TRINITY" OF SENIOR LEADERS -- DESAI, HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH, AND DEFENCE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM -- CANNOT IRON OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES THEY SHOULD QUIT. BUT THESE REMARKS DO NOT SEEM TO REFLECT ANY SIGNIFICANT SENTIMENT FAVORING DESAI'S RESIGNATION. THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF ANY OTHER FIGURE ON WHOM MAJOR JANATA ELEMENTS CAN READILY AGREE AS HIS SUCCESSOR CONTINUES TO INHIBIT THE VOICING OF SUCH A DEMAND.

10. AS WE HAVE REPORTED EARLIER, THERE IS A WIDESPREAD FEELING IN THE COUNTRY, SHARED BY MANY WITHIN THE PARTY, THAT THE JANATA HAS SQUANDERED ITS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE AND THAT THE BRIGHT PROMISE OF "NEW
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POLITICS" FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCY HAS BEEN LOST, PROBABLY IRRETRIEVABLY. THE SENSE OF DISILLUSION STEMS FROM MANY SOURCES. IT WAS TO SOME EXTENT INEVITABLE; NO GOVERNMENT IN AS PROBLEM-RIDDEN A COUNTRY AS INDIA COULD HAVE FULFILLED THE EXPECTATIONS AROUSED BY THE JANATA'S 1977 VICTORY. MORE TANGIBLE ELEMENTS IN THE DECLINE IN JANATA POPULARITY INCLUDE WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION OF A DETERIORATION IN LAW AND ORDER, PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH; THE DEPLORABLE PERFORMANCE OF SEVERAL IMPORTANT JANATA STATE GOVERNMENTS AND THE APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS OF THE CENTER TO TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION; JANATA'S DELAY IN MOVING TO IMPLEMENT ITS ECONOMIC POLICIES (SEE SEP-TEL); THE GROWING CONVICTION OF THE SO-CALLED "WEAKER" SECTIONS OF SOCIETY SUCH AS HARIJANS AND MUSLIMS THAT THE JANATA IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR INTERESTS; HEIGHTENED LABOR UNREST, COUPLED WITH A FAILURE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PART TO ENACT PROMISED INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LEGISLATION; THE APPARENT DEMORALIZATION OF IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF THE BUREAUCRACY; AND ABOVE ALL, THE SENSE THAT THIS IS SLOW-MOVING GOVERNMENT NOT REALLY THAT DIFFERENT FROM THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE PAST. SOME BRIGHT SPOTS DO STAND OUT IN THIS GENERALLY SOMBRE PICTURE. THE JANATA'S CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY IS ONE OF THEM, AND HAS WON WELL-DESERVED PLAUDITS FOR FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE, HELPING TO BOOST HIS POLITICAL STOCK TO THE POINT WHERE HE CAN BE CONSIDERED A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR TO DESAI. ITS HANDLING OF NUCLEAR MATTERS, INCLUDING THE PM'S "STANDING UP TO THE AMERICANS", HAS ALSO WON BROAD POPULAR APPROVAL. SO HAS ITS DISMANTLING OF THE EMERGENCY AND ITS RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY. MANY OBSERVERS HAVE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WAS THE INEVITABLE RESULT OF THE JANATA VICTORY AND THAT IN CONTINUING TO STRESS IT JANATA IS USING IT TO DEFLECT CRITICISM OF THE

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GOVERNMENT'S SHORTCOMINGS IN DEALING WITH OTHER PROBLEMS. THERE IS A PERCEPTION THAT THE DESAI GOVERNMENT IS PRE-OCCUPIED WITH THE PAST AND IS CONTENT TO REST ON ITS PAST LAURELS. FOR INSTANCE, THE PROLONGED DEARINGS OF THE SHAH COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE "EXESSES" OF THE EMERGENCY STRIKE MANY PEOPLE AS LARGELY IRRELEVANT. THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO BECAUSE MRS. GANDHI SHOWS NO INCLINATION TO PAY ATTENTION TO IT AND BECAUSE HER RESURGENCE AS A REAL THREAT TO THE JANATA LENDS CREDENCE TO HER CONTENTION THAT THE SHAH COMMISSION IS A POLITICAL VENDETTA LAUNCHED BY AN INCREASINGLY WORRIED RULING PARTY.

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11. THE IMAGE AND POPULAR SUPPORT OF THE JANATA GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO BEEN SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY THE CONDUCT OF JANATA FACTIONAL LEADERS. THE PRE-OCCUPATION OF MINISTERS AND OTHERS WITH THE INTERNECINE POWER STRUGGLE HAS FURTHER LOWERED ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY ALREADY IMPAIRED, AT LEAST AT THE STATE LEVELS, BY LACK OF EXPERIENCE AND BY FRICTION BETWEEN POLITICAN AND BUREACRAT. IN RECENT WEEKS THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE HAS TAKEN ON NEW DIMENSIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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FACTIONALISM IN THE JANATA GOVERNMENTS OF NORTHERN INDIA HAS REACHED EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, HAS SPILLED OVER TO THE NATIONAL SCENE. PARTY INDISCIPLINE HAS INCREASED, HIGH COMMAND DIRECTIVES ARE FLOUTED, AND LEADERS ARE MORE AND MORE WILLING TO GO PUBLIC WITH THEIR FACTIONAL POSITIONS AND COMPLAINTS. EFFORTS TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES HAVE OBVIOUSLY FAILED, AND THE PARTY'S FACTIONS, ENGAGED IN COMPLICATED AND CHANGING ALLIANCES, ARE MOVING TO REINFORCE THEIR OWN POSITIONS RATHER THAN TO STEM THE ROT. SEVERAL TOP LEADERS ARE NOW WILLING TO ADMIT THAT JANATA HAS NOT LIVED UP TO PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS. FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE HINTED IN A SPEECH A MONTH AGO THAT HE WOULD RESIGN FROM OFFICE IN THREE MONTHS IF THE RULING PARTY FAILED TO FULFILL ITS PLEDGES. HE HAS NOW RENEWED THAT THREAT, BUT THUS FAR IT HAS LITTLE IF ANY IMPACT. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AND GROWING BELIEF THAT SOMETHING DRASTIC WILL HAVE TO BE DONE, OR WILL HAPPEN. IT IS THIS THROUGH -- THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE TOP LEADERS WILL BE CUT TO SIZE, THAT A MAJOR REALIGNMENT OF FORCES MIGHT TAKE PLACE -- THAT LED THE "STATESMAN" TO ITS CONCLUSION THAT THE JANATA GOVERNMENT CANNOT LAST ITS FULL TERM OF OFFICE AS IT IS NOW CONSTITUTED. WHAT FORM THIS COULD TAKE IS A MATTER OF INTENSE SPECULATION. AS OVER THE PAST MONTHS, VARIOUS SCENARIOS ARE SPELLED OUT: THE DISMISSAL OR DEMOTION OF CHARAN SINGH, A RE-GROUPING OF SCATTERED CONGRESS FORCES BEHIND DESAI, A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JANA SANGH GROUP AND OTHER PARTY ELEMENTS, THE ISOLATION OUTSIDE THE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE MORE DIEHARD GROUPS WITHIN THE JANA SANGH AND THE BLD, ARE AMONG THEM. THE PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCE NOW, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE CALL FOR CHANGE HAS TAKEN ON A NEW URGENCY PROMPTED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RESIGNATION FROM PARTY OFFICE OF CHARAN SINGH, THE TURMOIL IN SEVERAL STATE GOVERNMENTS, AND THE SETBACK AT AZAMGARH, DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE INTERRELATED.

12. WILL DESAI BE ABLE TO TURN THINGS AROUND AND REVERSE THE DOWNWARD TREND? DESPITE MRS. GANDHI'S SUCCESSES AT THE POLLS AND HER WILLINGNESS TO TAKE TO THE STREETS IN AGITATIONAL CAMPAIGNS, GENERAL ELECTIONS STILL SEEM A LONG WAY OFF. BUT FOR DESAI TO MAKE GOOD USE OF THAT TIME WILL INVOLVE HIS TAKING THE TOUGH TIMELY DECISIONS IN PARTY MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS HE HAS GENERALLY BEEN UNWILLING TO MAKE OVER THE PAST 14 MONTHS. IT WILL MEAN A GREATER SENSE OF URGENCY, LESS OF THE SELF-SATISFIED COMPLACENCY WHICH OFTEN MAKES THIS OLD MAN SO EVIDENTLY NOT IN A HURRY. HIS TASK WILL BE MADE MORE DIFFICULT BY AN AROUSED OPPOSITION LED BY AN UNSCRUPULOUS LEADER SKILLFUL IN EXPLOITING SHORTCOMINGS, REAL AND ALLEGED, ON HER OPPONENT'S PART. THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE PREPARED TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FACING JANATA WILL PROVIDE SOME EVIDENCE ABOUT THE FUTURE COURSE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND PARTY. WE SHOULD HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF THIS BEFORE DESAI REACHES WASHINGTON. IT SEEMS EVIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS OVER THE NEXT MONTH THE POPULAR AND POLITICAL STANDING OF THE DESAI GOVERNMENT AND THE JANATA PARTY WILL BE WEAKER THAN THEY WERE WHEN THE PM AND PRESIDENT CARTER LAST MET.

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